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St Nicholas, Bishopwearmouth Quinquennial Inspection Report

April 2025

Executive Summary

The church is generally in good condition.

The pitched roof remains in good condition but some of the flat roofs need minor repairs. The condition of the roof fascias varies and some require attention. The rainwater goods are in fair condition but some fixings need replacing. The brick walls are generally in good condition, as are windows and external doors. The condition of the concealed steelwork within the external walls will require monitoring and the brickwork should be kept well pointed to reduce the risk of water reaching the steelwork.

Internally, the building is well presented and inviting. Initial settlement and past water ingress have damaged the walls and floor, and it would be desirable to redecorate those areas. The heating has failed earlier this year and will need to be replaced.

The below-ground drainage is in working order but most of the gullies are blocked by leaves and soil. Reactive repairs are undertaken swiftly but the building would benefit from improving planned cyclical maintenance and statutory compliance.

Recommendations for smaller repairs and ongoing observation have been made in this report. Please note that considerable repairs and refurbishments will be needed within the next 5-10 years and that money should be set aside in time.

Works carried out since the last QIR:

- Fibreglass coated asphalt roof to tower replaced with mineral felt;
- South aisle roof renewed in felt.

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Scope of Inspection, Limitations & Context

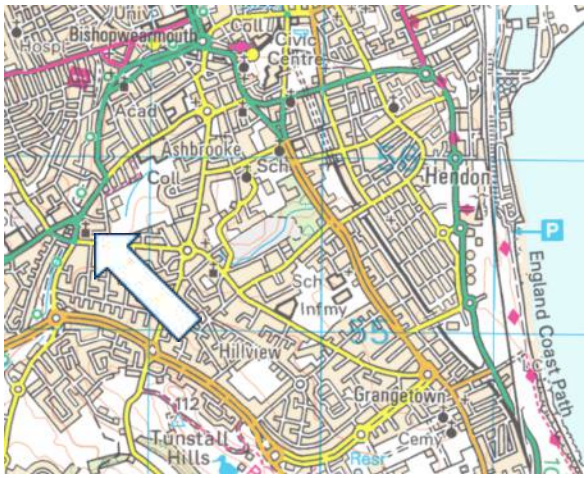
The inspection was instructed by the PCC and carried out on Thursday 27th March 2025. The morning was windy and partly cloudy at 11^{0}C. The survey was undertaken by Maya Polenz ARB AABC in the presence of the incumbent and a member of the PCC.

The survey was undertaken from ground level only. The tower, tower roof and Nave roof void were inspected. The flat roofs were seen from a ladder with the exception of the Vestry roof.

This report follows the general guidelines set out by the Care of Churches Measure 2018; it is not a specification and must not be used for the execution of the work.

Description of the Church

Name:	St Nicholas
Church Code:	613164
Diocese:	Durham
Archdeaconry:	Sunderland
Parish:	Wearmouth
Listed Building :	Grade II
Conservation Area:	N/A



Mid-weekly Holy Communion is held in the Lady Chapel and attracts around 12 worshippers. Weekly Sunday services attract around 10 (early morning) and 30 (mid-morning). Large services attract around 80 people. Concerts are held in the church about twice per year.

St Nicholas's church was constructed in 1939. It is reported as the only CoE church to have been consecrated during WW2. It was built to the designs of Donald McIntyre, Cathedral Architect at Durham (1935-69) to a modern design with Art Deco influences which stays larger intact except for recent roof alterations. The original internal decorations remain intact. St Nicholas houses the largest collection in the country of Leonard Evett's stained glass, and is the largest collection of C20 stained glass by a single artist anywhere in England.

The church consists of a rectangular nave with small side aisles for circulation and an apsidal east end. Lady Chapel is attached to the south of the chancel and a two-storey vestry to the north. Tall square tower at the southwest end. A small circular baptistry at the northwest corner.

Quinquennial Inspection Report

1. Roof, Roof Coverings & Rainwater Disposal

Summary

The Nave roof, tower and south aisle roofs are in good condition. The original solid asphalt roof to the north aisle and Baptistry is in reasonable condition but needs localised repairs. Water is pooling on the felt roof over the Lady Chapel. All flat roofs behind parapet gutters require regular cleaning to prevent debris accumulating and entering the drains.

Gutters and downpipes are in good condition except for two loose shoes and areas of plant growth. All gutters and downpipes will require redecoration within the next 5-7 years. The below-ground drainage is working well but all gullies are covered by leaves and soil. The whole rainwater disposal system requires cleaning twice a year.

The sump pump to the basement requires review as it does not work reliably and is difficult to access when the area is flooded.

Pitched Roofs (Nave & Chancel)

Pitched clay pantiled roofs, apsidal over Chancel, the latter not seen. Apex copper cross on decorative stone base to east end of Nave. The roof space over the Nave can be accessed from the upper tower level. The roof structure is made of metal roof trusses, which support timber purlins, rafters and closed timber boarding. 10 No. glass roof tiles provide a degree of natural light. Access between tower and nave covered in lead.

Roof and coverings to Nave are the original and in good condition. This includes the lead over the dormer-like structure covering the access. However, the adjacent lead gutters could not be seen, and it is unclear where the western one drains to - there is a brick parapet at the west end where an outlet should be, and that brick wall shows signs of water ingress.

There is no evidence of bats within the roof void over the Nave but an ecologist should be consulted prior to undertaking any roof works.

Flat Roofs (Tower, Aisles, Lady Chapel, Vestry)

Concrete flat roofs originally covered in solid asphalt with copper drips to visible edges. This arrangement remains only over the Baptistry. The north aisle retains its asphalt roof but the stolen copper drips were neatly replaced with black fibre-reinforced plastic. All other asphalt roofs replaced with mineral felt. Tower, Vestry & Lady Chapel with brick parapets.

Recently felted roofs to the Tower and South Aisle in good condition. A shiny plastic half-fascia was added to the latter, with the mineral felt visible extended over it. This installation, whilst

appropriate elsewhere, detracts from the quality of the original design - it should not be copied on the north side. Concrete fascias to aisles roofs show extensive cracking throughout. Previous repair attempts are visible but failing. Some cracks on the north indicate ongoing water ingress. The asphalt of the North Aisle roof has some small cracks, and bubbling over the Baptistry. The Lady Chapel roof, reported as at least 10 years old, is in good condition but there is a large dip just in front of the outlet, causing water to pool for long periods of time. The ponding was mentioned in QIR 2021 but not the extent. Leaves and debris accumulate behind the parapet. The latter also applies to the Vestry.

No.	Repair required	Priority
1.1	Rainwater disposal. Replace missing section of gutter to Chancel Roof. Re-align and clear the remaining gutter and downpipe to ensure swift disposal of rainwater. Ask the roofer to take photos and confirm the condition of the Chancel roof.	**B**
1.2	Nave roof. From within the roof space, pull into place the southwestern most glazed tile to prevent further water ingress. Check all other glass tiles remain weathertight.	**B**
1.3	Vestry & Lady Chapel roofs. At the next annual clean, the roofer shall inspect and report on (i) the felt and flashings of the Vestry roof, in particular at the east end which suffers from water ingress, and (ii) the pooling on the Lady Chapel roof.	**B**
1.4	Tower/Nave roof abutment. A steeplejack or roofer to clean the concealed gutters and to report on their condition and drainage arrangements. Whilst accessing the tower and church, the steeplejack shall carefully lift the end of the lead sill drips below the windows to ensure they are shedding water away from the wall.	**B**
1.5	Tower roof. Fix hinges to light-weight GRP hatch cover to prevent it blowing away.	**B**
1.6	North Aisle roof. Carry out bitumen repairs to seal all cracks including the drip abutments to prevent backtravelling of water. Apply a protective UV coating (light grey, not glaringly white) to reduce solar impact, especially to the Baptistry roof.	**B**
1.7	Tower roof. Redecorate flagpole. Repair spalling concrete base.	**C**
1.8	Roofs. Clear leaves and debris from flat roofs at least once a year.	**M**
1.9	Aisle Roofs. Following the repairs to the north aisle roof, monitor the concrete cracking for further signs of water ingress. If none, allow for undertaking concrete repairs to reduce the risk of further rusting of the embedded steel.	**O/C**

An ecologist should confirm the absence of protected species prior to any pitched roof repairs.

Gutter, Downpipes & Gullies

Cast iron half round gutters and circular downpipes discharging into surface water drains via gullies. Rainwater goods painted brick-red and last decorated in 2014. They appear generally to be in good condition except for some loose fixings, a cracked section of pipe in similar state as reported in 2021 as well as a lack of regular cleaning. The localised flaking of paint mentioned in QIR 2021 is now starting in other locations and redecoration is likely to be required within the next 5-7 years. This should include the timber fascias to Nave and Chancel, where joints are beginning to open.

The 2014 redecorations failed prematurely. It would therefore be prudent to remove that paint layer entirely and to pay particular attention to specifying the correct paint and choosing a suitably experienced contractor.

The gutter ends east of the chimney and at the southwest Nave are blocked, the latter with evidence of past overspilling onto the adjacent brickwork. The Chancel gutter reported as blocked in QIR 2021 has since fallen down. The gullies' covers are blocked with soil and leaves, but the system itself is draining freely. The rainwater disposal system would benefit from regular preventative maintenance.

The basement and access area was flooded although it had not rained for several days. The sump pump to the basement was not working and very difficult to access as both the stairwell and room were flooded. The flooding of the basement room is a recurring topic within past QIRs. It also led to the irreparable damage of the gas boiler this winter.

No.	Repair required	Priority
1.10	Downpipes. Fix loose bands to shoes at Lady Chapel and north side of Vestry.	**B**
1.11	Sump pump. Review arrangement to improve access and reliability.	**B**
1.12	Rainwater goods. Redecorate all rainwater goods and timber fascia boards. Remove all traces of the 2014 decorations. Choose suitable compatible paint system. Replace cracked upper section of downpipe to North Aisle (adjacent Baptistry return wall).	**C+**
1.13	Rainwater disposal. Clear all gutters, downpipes and gullies at least twice a year.	**M**

2. External Walls

Summary

The brickwork is in good condition but the pointing requires localised repair. Due to the presence of embedded steelwork, the pointing should be well-kept at all times. Repairs outstanding since QIR 2021 should be completed.

Description

The brickwork is laid in Flemish bond, renowned for its structural durability as well as distinctive pattern and refined look. The alternating header/stretcher pattern is particularly well visible in areas of slightly recessed pointing. No DPC was visible, which is unusual for a building of its age - is it possible that the DPC has been bridged by pointing? The brickwork encases structural steelwork situated between each of the Nave windows. The structure suffered from considerable initial settlement which caused cracking in the north wall and Nave floor.

Structural openings made mostly of flat reinforced brickwork lintels but some with brick arches. Stonework surrounds to windows are flat and recessed within the brickwork openings. The church doors have decorative stonework surrounds, at the south door topped by a tympanon with half-relief carvings (St Nicholas aiding sailors in distress) and a short string course.

Condition - generally

Brickwork and stonework are in good condition. The pointing is in reasonably good condition. Pointing is being washed out below the windows due to the lack of a sill with drip detail. There is some loss at the window jambs and a number of the vertical ('perp') joints are failing. None of these would normally be of immediate concern but, due to the presence of embedded steelwork, the pointing should be kept in pristine condition to prevent water causing rusting and expansion. A number of areas of pointing have been renewed in the past. The most recent pointing does not match the historic recessed pointing, which makes it hard to appreciate the brick pattern. Its colour is also considerably too light.

Tower

Lower sections re-pointed in 2014 but not recessed and mortar too white. Upper sections re-pointed in 1998 look better but there is a small number of open perp joints and localised erosion under the pseudo-gargoyles to the south. The inner parapets are lined with fibreglass, which is breaking down (as observed in 2021) and peeling at the southwest corners.

Open joints in the tympanum and string course to the south entrance need pointing. The timber louvres are in fair condition but one is missing on the west elevation, as reported in QIR 2021.

West End

The abutment to the Tower is wet due to a concealed gutter - see recommendation 1.4.

Baptistry

Repointed within the last 10 years; pointing untidy and too white.

North Nave & Aisles

The eroded pointing around the round western window should be monitored. The open joints in the chimney stack reported in QIR 2021 need to be addressed. There is a historic structural tie at the east end of the Nave wall. The long-standing vertical settlement cracks between the win- dows appear as per QIR 2021 & 2016 and should be repointed. If they opened again, a suitably experienced structural engineer should investigate the condition of the embedded steelwork.

The coping stone to the dwarf wall west of the north entrance has been knocked out of place and a corner has broken off. There are open joints at the base of both dwarf walls.

Vestry

North wall repointed within the last 10 years similar to the Baptistry; pointing untidy and too white. Windows to the north wall are the only ones with a traditional stone sill with drip detail.

East wall incorporates previously rebuilt areas, most notably above the first floor window where the brickwork does not match. The coping stones are somewhat uneven. The surface of original brickwork is more eroded than elsewhere. Wind-driven water ingress over the ground floor window is being reported although there is no obvious reason and the wall has been repointed in the past.

The brickwork to the parapets is friable and should be monitored. Similar issues are present at the Tower and Lady Chapel, and are due to higher exposure and lower temperature of the brickwork in the parapets combined with a somewhat poorer quality of brick. The parapets do not appear to have a damp proof course (DPC), which is likely to contribute somewhat to water ingress into the east walls at the Vestry and Lady Chapel.

The open joints in the basement retaining wall reported in QIR 2021 have not been addressed. Its west end has also shifted, potentially some time ago. The railings are starting to disintegrate and might lose their structural integrity within the quinquennium. The copings are now severely rustjacked and broken.

Chancel

Brickwork to east end repointed within the last 10 years similar to the Baptistry; pointing untidy and too white. The wall base displays an arched band of damp brickwork and salt efflorescence which indicates that water run off and splash from the adjacent hardstanding effects the wall.

South wall over Lady Chapel in good condition. North wall over Vestry not inspected.

Lady Chapel

The Lady Chapel is somewhat affected by the above mentioned water run off. Its east elevation displays friable brickwork throughout, similar to the Vestry. The upper third of the brickwork is coated, according to QIR 2021 with silicone. The coating is peeling. It is unclear whether the water ingress is ongoing or whether the roof replacement addressed it fully. Eroding joints to the east wall were superficially repointed in the past and this poor workmanship is now failing. The coating and loose mortar should be removed, the wall repointed where needed and the situation monitored.

South Nave & Aisles

Similar to north walls minus any signs of structural movement. There are a small number of brick vents below what could be a DPC in the South Aisle wall - although at a level well below the internal floor level and the floors are believed to be of solid concrete, not suspended timber. The ground levels to the south appear to have sunken and now expose foundation bricks in need of repointing, and raised gullies.

No.	Repair required	Priority
2.1	South Entrance. Repoint all open joints to string course and tympanum to prevent further water ingress and stone decay.	**B**
2.2	External walls. Undertake a phased programme of raking out and repointing all open or failed joints within stone- and brickwork to stop water ingress to the embedded steel. Pointing should match the original in style and colour. Include chimney. Include removal of silicone coating and loose mortar to Lady Chapel walls. Ensure all lead sill drips are put in the correct position at the end of the pointing works to enable water shedding away from the wall. Consider taking down and rebuilding the friable parapets to Lady Chapel and Vestry with a DPC connected to the roof flashings to stop water ingress into walls.	**C**
2.3	North entrance. Re-bed the loose coping stone to the east dwarf wall. Indent the missing corner. Repoint all open joints to the dwarf walls.	**C**

2.4	Boiler Room retaining wall. Rake out and repoint the brickwork, re-bed copings and replace where broken beyond repair. Liaise with the local conservation officer to decide on the repair or replacement of the rusting and disintegrating railing.	**C**
2.5	Chancel wall. Replace the concrete hardstanding at the base of the wall with pebbles or grass. Introduce a channel to prevent surface water draining into the grassed area around the Chancel and Lady Chapel, and thus back into the building.	**C**
2.6	Stonework over South Entrance. Consider a programme of stone conservation for the carvings over the main entrance, perhaps as part of the centenary.	**D/C+**
2.7	Tower walls. Monitor erosion of pointing in upper sections of tower. If accelerating, consider repointing works within the next 5-10 years. Include inner sides of parapets where a previous fibreglass coating has been breaking down. Include replacement of missing louvre blade to Tower west opening.	**O/C+**

3. Doors & Windows

Summary

Doors and windows are generally in good condition with the exception of the metal casements in the Vestry. The minor damages present in the stained glass windows and associated hoppers should be monitored. Lost perspex fixings should be replaced. Plans should be made to renew all perspex within the next 5-10 years.

Windows

There are three stained glass windows in the Baptistry by Marion Grant. The 47 other stained glass windows by Leonard Evetts form the largest collection of his work in England.

West window comprises triple round-headed lancets flanked by a single square-headed lancet with projecting hood, and square windows below. Nave south and north windows comprise a single roundel and paired round-headed lancets within rectangular openings; all have bottom-hinged segments for ventilation. Aisles have small square windows, half of which are intended for tilting. South side of the Chancel has three tall, narrow round-headed windows. These windows repeat on the north side but are shorter in height. No East window. Baptistry and Lady Chapel windows are rectangular. All these windows have brick lintels, recessed stone surrounds and metal frames. Original windows have small paned leaded lights while later replacements in stained glass. Almost all windows except for the Tower and Vestry north side are covered with protective perspex fixed to the stone surround.

All windows are in good condition. The bowing in the Fawcett memorial window in the South Aisle remains as reported in QIR 2021. The top panel of the second-most western window in the N Nave wall is bowing slightly; this should be monitored. Smaller damages noted: one cracked and one shattered glass pane in the upper glazing of the southernmost west window; one small damaged pane in the second-most eastern window in the S Nave wall; two fine cracked bottom panes to easternmost window in N Nave wall; three of the glass hopper wings on each side of the Nave are cracked or shattered, which is more than the one mentioned in QIR 2021.

None of the hoppers in the Nave are operational and the tilting frames in the aisles are all painted shut - the church cannot be actively ventilated except via its doors.

The perspex over-glazing is looking somewhat discoloured due to UV light and dirt. Some of the panels are missing fixings, particularly at the Lady Chapell. There is substantial organic growth on the stonework of the lower Tower east window due to the ventilation gap being blocked.

There is some rusting of the metal framed casement windows in the Tower first stage, and considerable rusting to those on both floors of the Vestry. The Vestry first floor north-facing window misses a glazing pane.

No.	Repair required	Priority
3.1	Engage a suitably experienced glazier to: - Replace missing fixings to perspex covers to the Lady Chapel and to renew the lime putty seal between stonework and brickwork in the reveal; - Refit the perspex cover to the lowest east tower window with a sufficient air gap. Carefully remove the organic growth between stonework and perspex; - Replace missing glazing pane to Vestry first floor north-facing window; - Remove rusting to metal window frames to all Vestry windows, redecorate. - Remove rusting to metal frames on Tower first floor, redecorate. At the end of these works, ensure all lead sill drips are pointing away from the walls to enable water shedding away from the wall.	**B**
3.2	Windows. The external perspex has yellowed and it is difficult to inspect the windows externally. Engage a suitably experienced glazier to replace the external protections with UV-resistant polycarbonate and to prepare a detailed report on the condition of all windows.	**C+**
3.3	Windows. Reinstate functionality of the tilting windows to the side aisles and the ventilation hoppers to the Nave to enable controlled active ventilation.	**C+**
3.4	Monitor the condition of the following glass damages: - Bowing in the Fawcett memorial window in the South Aisle; - Bowing of top panel of second-most western window in N Nave wall; - 1No. cracked & 1No. shattered top pane in southernmost W window; - 1No. damaged pane in the second-most eastern window in S Nave wall; - 2No. fine cracked bottom panes to easternmost window in N Nave wall; - 3No. cracked or shattered glass hopper wings to each side of Nave.	**O**

External Doors

External doors to south and north entrances are four-panelled double doors. Both sets are in working order but some panels are split and the doors would benefit from redecoration. The Vestry staircase door is framed and boarded. It is in fair decorative condition.

3.5	External doors. Carefully fill split panels and redecorate all external doors.	**C**

4. Church Interiors

Summary

The church is in good condition, well-lit and welcoming.

Historic cracking in Nave floors and walls appears to be stable and internal redecoration could be considered, funding permitting. The South Aisle walls are now dry following the reroofing; they should be repaired and redecorated. Water damage to Lady Chapel and Vestry need to be investigated and stopped prior to repairing the internal damage.

South Lobby

Accessed via porch and second set of double doors. From here concrete stairs lead to the tower rooms, glazed double doors to the Nave, a single glazed door to the South Aisle and a further door to a small storage room and electrical cupboard.

The storage room door of quarter-sawn oak but its frame and the porch doors wood grained; all with wrought-iron door handles. Storage room door is missing its lock. Glazed double doors to Nave are later added or replaced earlier doors. They are catching. QIR 2021 states that the glazing is neither toughened nor laminated; this should be verified.

Cracking and peeling wall paint to external walls mentioned in previous QIRs and likely partly caused by an incompatibility of paint layers.

Nave & Aisles

An open tall space with plastered and painted walls, 'Granwood' wood blocks with carpet in the central aisle and suspended partly vaulted textured plaster ceilings over the Nave. Aisles much lower with plain plastered ceilings which conceal overhead voids for the original heating, which was installed in panels below the Nave windows; the panels have since been plastered over.

The interiors are generally in good condition, well-lit and inviting.

The Nave floor has several cracks running north - south, largely in line with the embedded steelwork in the walls. QIR 2021 states that these were investigated in 2016 and appear stable since. This is still the case. Small cracks in Nave walls appear no worse than stated in QIR 2021. The aisle walls show crazing and peeling of decorations to match that in South Lobby and Tower stairs. The south aisle is in particularly poor decorative condition due to water ingress prior to reroofing. The ceiling access panels in the aisles are very thin and bowing.

Baptistry

Circular room with plain plaster walls and floating stone bench to external wall. Floor continued from Nave. Flat plaster ceiling with simple coving and central circular recess with light fitting

over font. Central stone font on large stone dias.

In good condition, well-lit and inviting. Light fitting and ceiling would benefit from cleaning.

Chancel

Walls, ceiling and floor continued from Nave. Chancel raised by one stone step from Nave, with wooden pulpit and choir stalls on each side. Organ console in north wall. Central aisle carpeted. Stone step and paving to altar area, separated by low timber communion rails. Chancel apse with brown-golden paint and simple high altar.

Generally in good condition.

Lady Chapel

Flat plastered and painted ceiling and walls. Fully carpeted. Separated from Chancel by three fully glazed arches, one with a double door and two with decorative metalwork grilles. Altar and chair seating.

Generally in good condition but the plaster to the east wall and both returns is cracking widely. The external drainage problems and previous coating of the brickwork need to be rectified.

Vestry

Two stories. East-facing Sacristy with adjacent toilet on the ground floor. Flat plastered ceiling and walls, floor with carpet tiles. All doors timber-grained. Built-in wardrobe towards organ. Evidence of blistering paint to external walls and reports of water ingress through east window lintel, although no external defects visible. Carpet tiles stained and loose in toilet. The latter in fair condition but would benefit from redecoration and removal of redundant services.

Stairs to first floor lead to east-facing choir vestry, upper organ room and a west-facing toilet. Choir Vestry: Flaking paint and cracks in the wall plaster and ceiling as QIR 2021. Metal window casements rusting severely. Original oak built-in furniture in need of resaturation. Room no longer in regular use. Paint in toilet peeling but underlying plaster appears sound.

Upper organ room contains pipes and electronic organ board. In reasonably good condition.

Tower

First floor storage room with flat plastered ceiling and walls. Second and third floor bare brick walls with louvres. From second floor access to roof void via timber steps. From third floor access to roof hatch via metal ladder. All floors bare concrete.

In reasonably good condition and all inspection access is safe. The first floor room would benefit from removing overspill storage.

No.	Repair required	Priority
4.1	South Lobby. Joiner to adjust the catching double doors to the Nave. Check records or joiner to confirm thickness of existing glazing. If indeed only 4mm standard glass, consider replacing it with toughened or laminated glass to prevent breakage and injury and to comply with building regulations' approved document K.	**B**
4.2	Sacristy & Choir Vestry. The ongoing water ingress to the east elevation should be investigated, starting at roof level.	**B**
4.3	South Aisle. Repair and redecorate water-damaged wall plaster.	**C**
4.4	Sacristy & Choir Vestry. Once the ongoing water ingress is stopped, redecorate all areas. Include removal of redundant services from Sacristy toilet. Resaturate original oak fittings in Choir Vestry. Consider increased use of Choir Vestry.	**C+**
4.5	Baptistry. Consider cleaning the light fitting and ceiling.	**D**
4.6	Nave, Baptistry & Chancel. Consider sanding and re-varnishing the floor, which should include raking out floor cracks and refilling to match floor colour. Consider full internal redecorations.	**D/C+**
4.7	South Lobby and Tower stairs. Consider redecorating walls incl. removal of incompatible paint layers.	**D/C+**
4.8	South Lobby. Replace missing lock to storage room door.	**D**
4.9	Storage rooms in South Lobby & Tower. Consider tidying storage.	**M**

Basement Boiler Room

Concrete floor and ceiling, plain plastered walls. Metal faced flush timber door. Metal slats to window. The basement and lightwell flood periodically and were flooded on the day of the inspection. The internal decoration, the door and window slats are affected by damp.

1.11	Sump pump. Review arrangement to improve access and reliability.	**B**
4.10	Basement Boiler Room. Repair and redecorate the external door, window slats, floor and plaster walls once the drainage and sump pump have been fixed.	**C+**

5. Fittings & Furnishings

Summary

All fittings and fixtures are in good condition.

Liturgical fittings & furniture

All in good condition:

- Stone font in Baptistry;
- 2 No. stained pulpits; oak Bishop's chair, choir stalls and priests' desks, altar rails
- Wooden altar in Lady Chapel.

Organ

Rebuilt and extended in 1985, last surveyed in 2017: https://npor.org.uk/survey/N15161

Other Furniture

All in good condition and as listed in QIR 2021:

- Oak frontal chest in North Aisle;
- 2No oak cupboards to rear of Nave;
- Oak tables to front and rear of Nave;
- Upholstered beech framed chairs in Nave and in Lady Chapel;
- Fixed bookcase at rear of Nave;
- Fixed frontal with kneelers at front of Nave. *And also:*
- Upright piano to front of Nave;
- 2 No. fixed LED screens to front of Nave.

Bells, Pews, Wall & War Memorials - N/A

6. Installations & Fire Safety

Summary

The gas boiler stopped working following a basement flood in January 2025. The lightning conductor needs refixing and testing following the roofing works. All other installations appear to be in working order but the periodic testing of the electrical installations (EICR) is long overdue and other compliance (asbestos, fire) should be better documented.

Electrical Distribution

Distribution boards (DBs) exist in the electrical cupboard near the south entrance as well as the basement boiler room; the latter fitted in 2012 when the area was partly rewired. No Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) was undertaken within at least the last five years - or longer, as QIR 2021 marks it as outstanding, too. Churches are legally required to have their electrical installations inspected and tested regularly, typically every five years. This is mandated by the Electricity at Work Regulations 1989 and the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 and very likely a stipulation of your ongoing insurance cover.

Lighting

The current system dates from circa 1996 and comprises: wall-mounted lights in the Nave and Chancel; wall-mounted spotlights in the Apse; ceiling-mounted lights and wall-mounted spot-lights in the Lady Chapel (the latter replaced by LEDs prior to QIR 2021). The original mercury tungsten filament light fittings in the high ceiling of the Nave and Chancel remain in situ.

Lightning Conductor

A lightning conductor is attached to the tower flagpole but has not been refixed nor tested following the replacement of the tower roof. This should be remedied asap.

Gas & Heating

The gas meter and the gas-fired boiler (installed 2008) are located in the basement boiler room. The gas boiler is no longer working following flooding in January 2025.

The boiler served radiators in the side aisles. The Chancel is heated by electric plinth heaters fitted on the north & south walls; the convector heater by the communion rail is redundant. The Lady Chapel is heated independently by wall-mounted electric convector heaters.

Water

The basement cold-water supply feeds the boiler and a header tank in the first-floor toilet. The header tank serves the toilets and wash basins. An electric instantaneous hot water unit is located in the Sacristy toilet.

The water is metered. The meter for the church is in the basement. The vicarage and hall have a separate water meter elsewhere in the grounds.

Water Drainage

Below-ground drainage runs east to west with one drainage pipe on both the north and south sides. They discharge into the sewer which runs below the west lawn. The system is believed to be a combined system and appears to be in good working order.

Fire Safety

The fire extinguishers are checked and serviced annually. There is no fire alarm. The PCC should prepare a fire risk assessment (FRA) to comply with the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. A template is available here: https://www.ecclesiastical.com/documents/church-fire-risk-assessment.pdf Alternatively, I can provide names of suitably qualified fire risk assessors.

Asbestos

Reportedly, all asbestos was removed some 20 years ago when the original heating system was removed. Records should be investigated to ascertain which areas were surveyed and cleared at the time, and which areas were not. The latter may contain concealed asbestos and the risk should be assessed. An asbestos register should be kept, including detailed records of all previous removals.

Sound System

A sound system and an induction loop exist.

No.	Repair required	Priority
6.1	Lightning conductor. Fix the copper tape and arrange for the annual test asap.	**A**
6.2	Electrical Installations. Commission an EICR and undertake all essential repairs.	**A**
6.3	Asbestos. Investigate records of previous removal and keep copies available within an asbestos register. If any areas were not surveyed at the time, and asbestos could be present, commission an asbestos management survey for these areas.	**A**
6.4	Fire Safety. Prepare a fire risk assessment and keep to hand.	**B**
6.5	Heating. Investigate options for heating with a view to thermal comfort for people, environmental conditions for the stained glass, zoning according to use and a renewable heating source.	**B**
6.6	Consider replacing the luminaires in the wall lights and central lights with LED.	**D**

7. Environmental Sustainability & Vulnerability

Summary

The church's carbon emissions are likely low to medium. Thermal improvements and heating optimisation are possible and could be facilitated as part of future repairs.

The embedded steel construction could increase the building's risk from climate change.

Observations

Although the church's carbon emissions are likely to be low to medium, the PCC are encouraged to calculate their energy footprint using guidance available from CofE.

The built fabric with its thin walls and large areas of glazing is not conducive to reduced energy consumption. There is no insulation in the roof or above the ceiling to the Nave and Chancel. Insulation to the flat roofs of the Vestry block, Aisles, Baptistry and Lady Chapel is likely to be nominal. The external brick walls with concealed steelwork are likely to have relatively high heat losses, as will the large windows. The original solid floors are unlikely to have any insulation.

Potential thermal improvements

As the Lady Chapel can accommodate most regular services, consideration should be given to the justification for large energy-intensive improvements to the main church building. That said, the following thermal improvements are possible in principle. They are all subject to a holistic design to avoid cold bridging as well as early liaison with the local conservation officer:

- There is high potential for insulation above the suspended Nave & Chancel ceiling;
- There is medium to high potential for insulation to the side aisles, either on top of the existing flat roofs are within the suspended ceilings;
- There is high potential for insulation to the concealed Vestry & Lady Chapel roofs;
- There is potential for internal wall insulation within the Nave and aisles subject to detailed hygrothermal modelling of the impact on the stained glass and embedded steel. This should be considered prior to the next internal decorations;
- There is potential for thermal improvements to the glazing as part of a future replacement of the current external protections. This should be considered in conjunction with improvements to the walls and window surrounds;
- There is potential for floor insulation but the works would be intrusive and expensive.

The existing gas-fired wet heating system is neither carbon neutral nor the most efficient way to provide thermal comfort in a room with a very high ceiling as it predominantly heats air, which then rises. As the boiler is no longer working, alternative fuel sources and heating systems should be explored.

The south-facing roof could support solar panels. The large roof size would support rainwater harvesting. Minewater heat recovery is possible (but not necessarily easy) in the area. Other options could be wastewater or ground source heat pumps. Air-source heat pumps would need careful consideration to avoid unacceptable noise levels for the neighbouring residential areas.

Climate Change Vulnerability

Due to the embedded steel construction, the church could be at an increased risk from climate change. Increased temperatures, humidity and driving rain associated with climate change can accelerate corrosion, shortening the lifespan of steel structures. The building will need more frequent external repairs and maintenance to reduce the risk of corrosion.

The roof is exposed but not deemed to be at particular high risk from increasing storms. As is best practice, the sizing of gutters and downpipes and the adequacy of the existing drainage system should be considered as part of future re-roofing works; or early should there be any indication that they are inadequate.

The building is not in a flood risk zone.

8. Churchyard & Boundary

Summary

The churchyard and boundary features are generally well maintained and safe to access.

The area north of the church is laid out as a car park. The tarmac extends around the east end, then becomes a path along the south front leading to a pedestrian gate in the west. The area immediately south of the church features a deep bed of perennials and shrubs. Similar planting flanks the main path towards the south door. The rest is sloping grass. Timber fencing with hedging forms the south and west perimeter towards the roads.

There is a light above the south door. The paths are sufficiently illuminated by wall-mounted motion sensor floodlights: two on the south side of the church, four on the front of the church hall (covering the east end) and three on the north side of the church.

There are no burials in the churchyard.

The churchyard is maintained by the PCC. Periodic grounds maintenance is contracted to the local council. The planting and fences are in good condition. The cracks and unevenness in the tarmac and concrete paving are as described in QIR 2021 and still in need of attention.

8.1	Churchyard. Fill the crack in the tarmac to the south path. Reinstate missing bricks, and lift & rebed loose paving to the steps and platform outside the south door.	**B**

9. Accessibility

Summary

There is step-free access from the northern side but not from the main entrance. All doors operate manually but Nave, Baptistry and Lady Chapel are otherwise reasonably accessible. There is fully accessible toilet provision within the adjacent church hall.

South Door

A wide gently sloping tarmac path leads up from Queen Alexandra Road towards a stepped access - three steps to an intermediate platform intersected by a smaller footpath leading from the west gate to the east end, and another seven steps from there to the south door.

A ramped approach would be desirable and can be achieved within the existing grounds.

North Door

Level access into the church is possible from the car park to the north. A ramp leads from the car park into the adjacent church hall.

Internal Access

The external double doors to the south are fixed open when the church is open. The next two sets of double doors could be automated, the first would ideally also require a vision panel. All other doors in the church are manually operated.

The South Lobby and Nave provide sufficient natural light levels and are sufficiently wide to accommodate wheelchair access. The timber floor is reasonably even. The central carpet is firmly fixed and accessible. The chair seating can be moved to accommodate wheelchairs anywhere within the church and there is sufficient space for access in general.

The Baptistry is accessible step-free as are the Lady Chapel and the Sacristy through their respective east doors. The single steps leading to the Chancel could be ramped.

The church benefits from an induction loop.

Facilities

There is a dedicated accessible toilet in the church hall. It can accommodate a motorised wheelchair, is regularly used, and appears sufficient for current needs.

There is a kitchen in the church hall but it is not fully accessible. Consideration to improving accessibility should be given when remodelling in the future.

9.1	Access. Consider access improvements to the main south door and within the church. Consider improving kitchen access when remodelling in the future (C+)	**C**

10. Maintenance

Summary

The church and churchyard is generally well maintained. All necessary repairs are put in hand swiftly. These existing arrangements should be extended to include all statutory compliance as well as regular preventative maintenance.

Observation & Guidance

The PCC are commended for keeping the building and grounds well maintained. If needed, advice on maintenance is available from the SPAB Faith in Maintenance calendar.

The statutory compliance listed in section 6 should be kept up to date. Copies of all relevant records should be kept in a log book within the Vestry. It might be beneficial to establish a little rota of what needs doing how often in order to keep track. Compliance should be on the agenda of PCC meetings at least one per year.

As there is a history of water ingress, leaves and debris should be cleared from flat roofs at least once a year. All gutters and gullies should be cleaned twice per year. Both preventative maintenance tasks could be undertaken by a local contractor under a standing agreement.

Recommendations

Please refer the a separate excel spreadsheet with priorities & budget costings.

This report was prepared by Maya Polenz ARB AABC in April 2025.

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Heritage Consultant

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Appendix A - Annotated Site Photographs

1 (top). View from S

2 (bottom). View from SE. Dark areas indicate water ingress (arrows)

3. Approach from S to main entrance

4. W side gate leading to main entrance

5. Open joints in Tympanum

6. View from main entrance doors

7. W elevation. Water ingress from gutter (arrow)

8. Foundation stone & distracting repointing

9. Baptistry. Distracting white repointing & past repairs to concrete fascia

10. Original & neat replacement drip detail at Baptistry/ North Aisle. Cracked pipe (arrow)

11. Condition of vertical cracking in N wall

12. North Entrance

13. Vestry N wall; missing glazing pane (arrow)

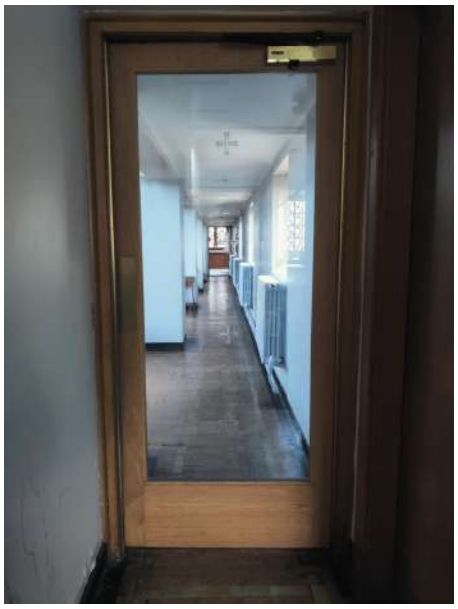
14. Vestry E wall

15. Water ingress into retaining wall to basement

16. Railing and copings in poor condition

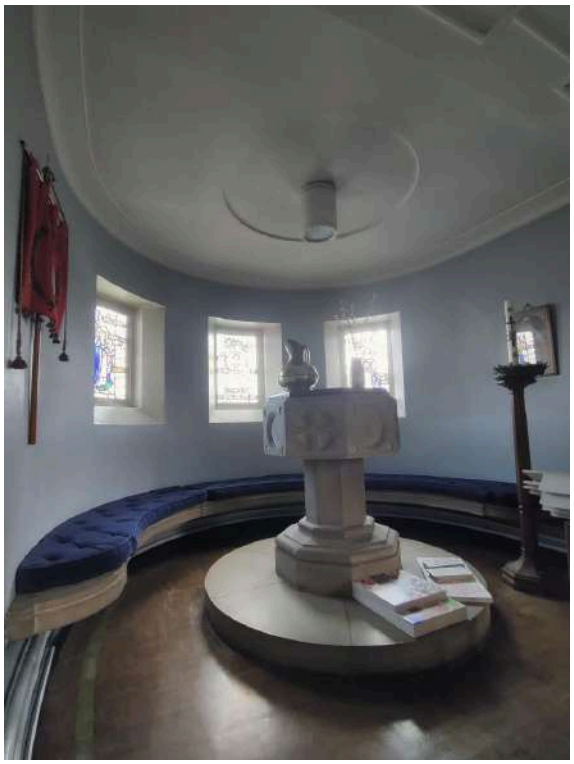
17. Missing gutter to Chancel (arrow); top of chimney needs pointing repairs

18. View from Nave into South Lobby

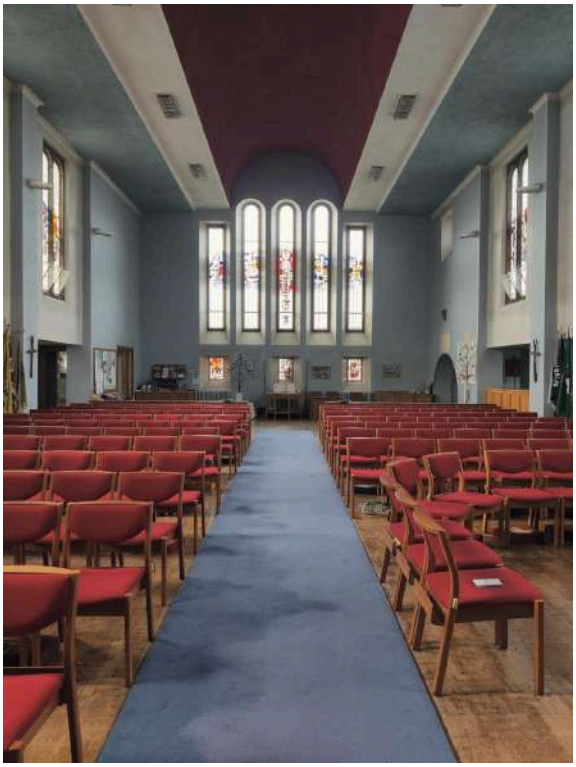


19. Door from South Lobby into South Aisle

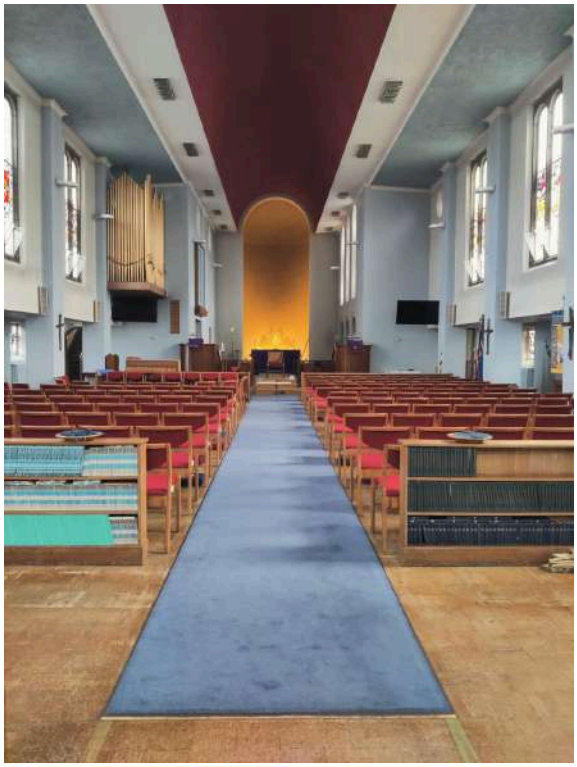
20. View across W end towards Baptistry



21. Baptistry

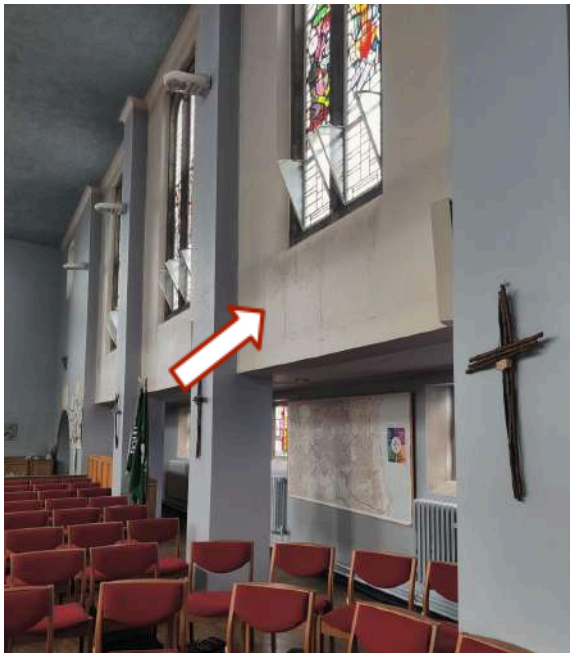


22. Nave view toward West window

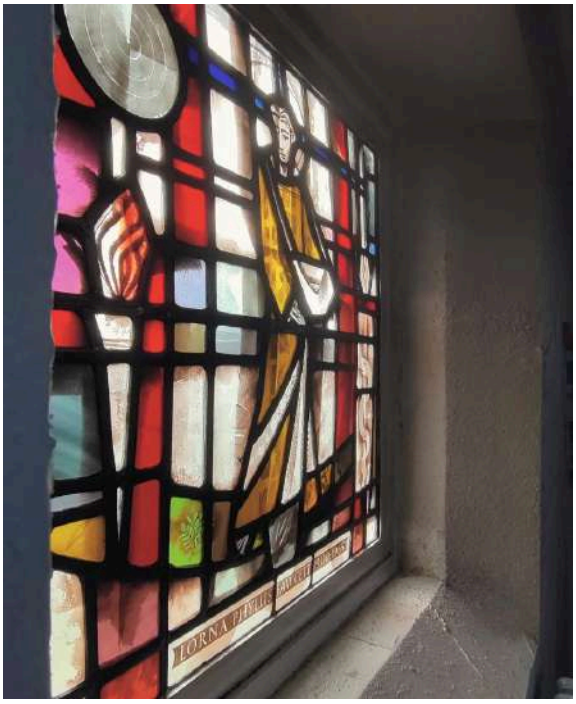


23. Nave view towards Chancel

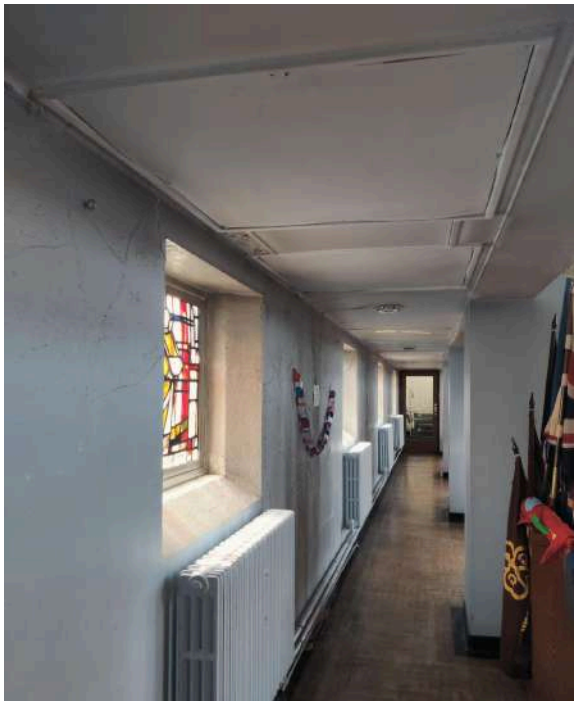
24. Floor in need of refinishing. Note the poorly sealed settlement crack (arrow)



25. N Nave wall. Arrow shows plastered-over original heating outlet positions under windows

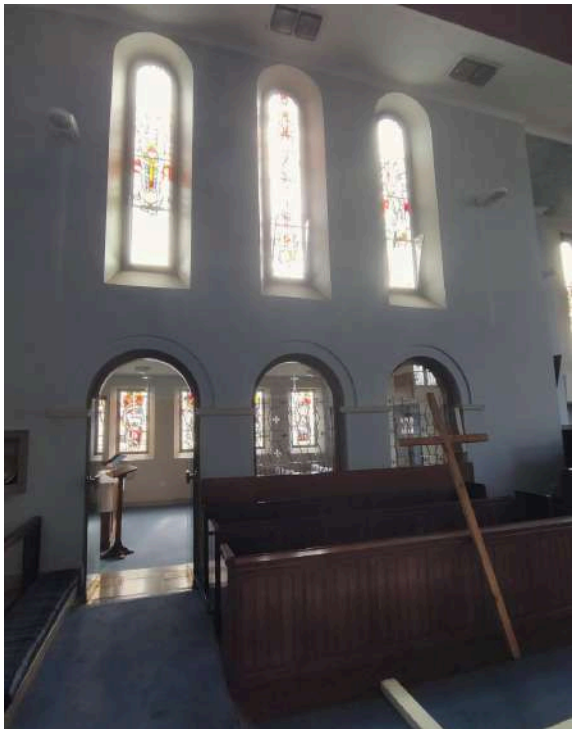


26. Bowing in the Fawcett memorial window

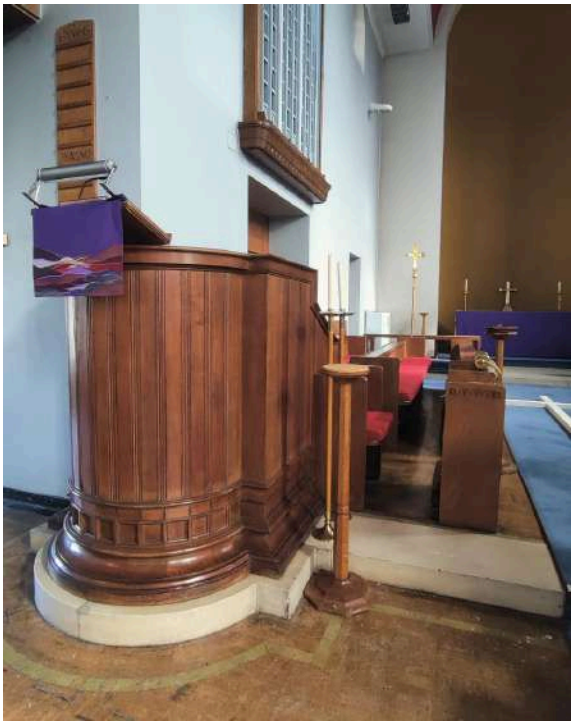


27. South Aisle in need of redecoration

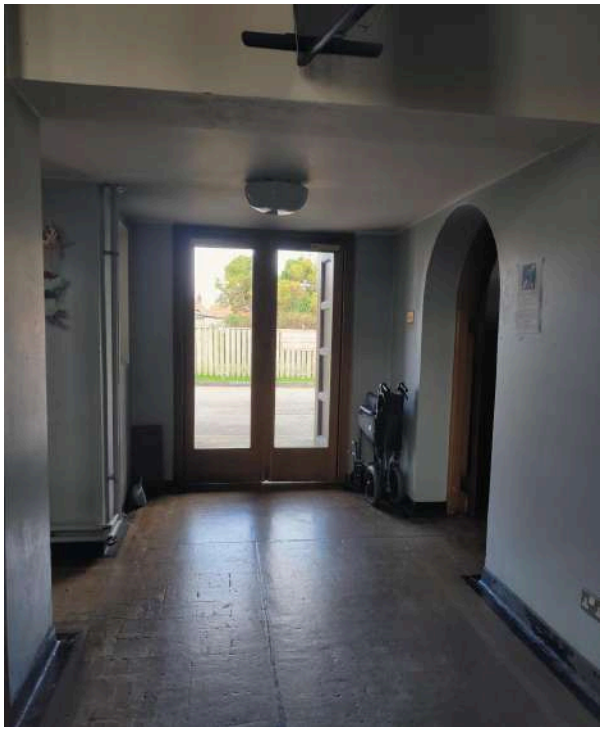
28. Lady Chapel



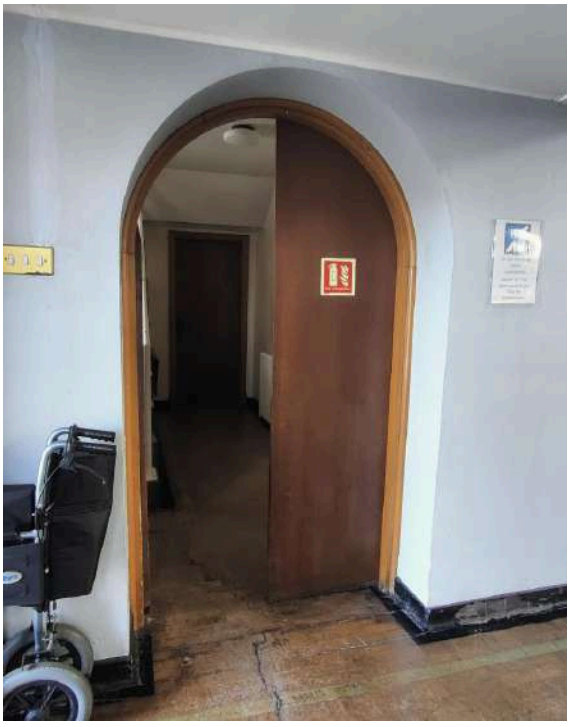
29. Chancel looking S, towards Lady Chapel



30. One of the pair of pulpits



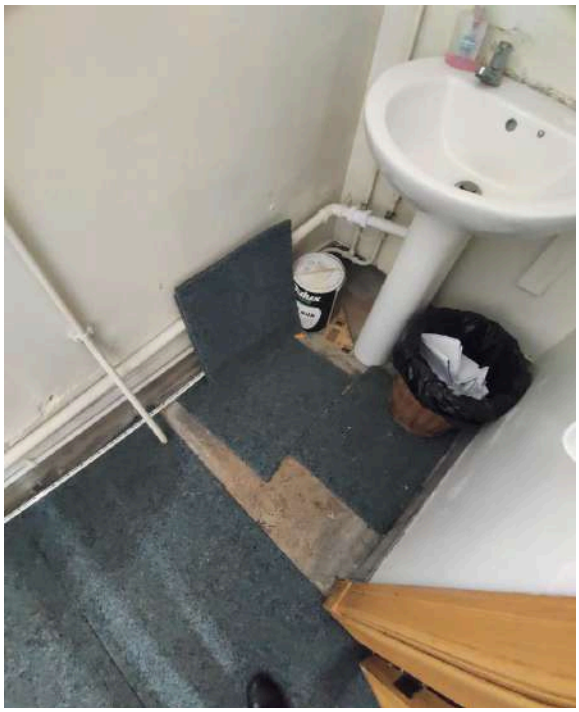
31. View from E end of Nave to N door



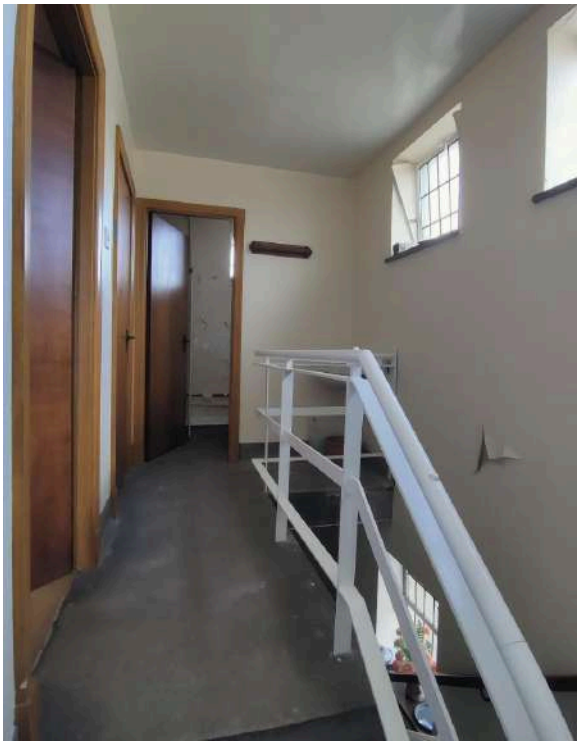
32. Door to Vestry

33. Sacristy looking towards Chancel

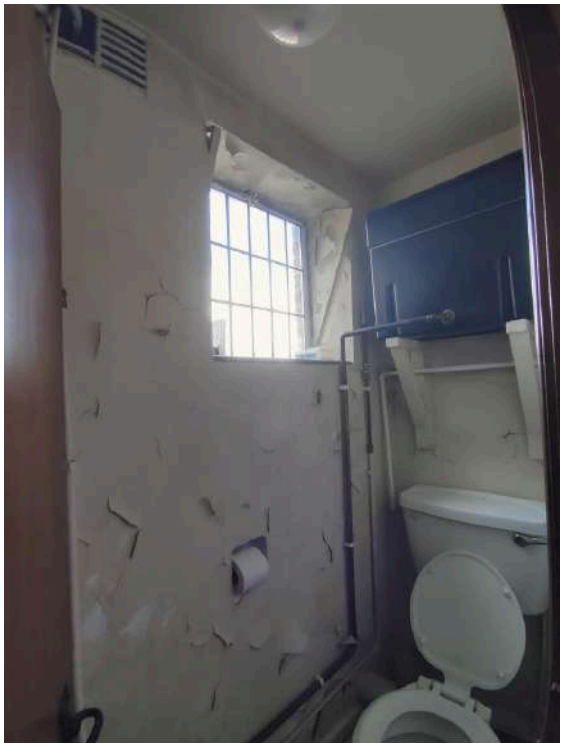
34. Blistering plaster in Sacristy



35. Toilet adjacent to Sacristy



36. Vestry First Floor



37. Vestry First Floor Toilet

38. Choir Vestry

39. Details of rusted window frame

40. Upper Organ Room